

St Joseph's Convent Independent Preparatory School

Inspection date

23 November 2016

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 3, 3g

- At the time of the previous full inspection, inspectors found that measurements of pupils' progress, including in the early years, were infrequent and inaccurate. Leaders, teachers and parents were unclear about whether pupils were making enough progress. Teachers did not take into account pupils' individual learning needs when planning lessons or additional support. Work for the most able pupils was not consistently demanding enough.
- Leaders have now implemented a suitable framework for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils. Teachers use a range of methods to assess pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, including published tests. Leaders are in the process of establishing links to enable teachers to work alongside teachers from other schools to moderate that their assessments are accurate.
- Teachers and leaders have begun to use an electronic system to record and track their assessments of pupils. Although slightly apprehensive at first, teachers are embracing the new tracking system with growing positivity. They are starting to use the assessment information to focus their attention to 'plug pupils' gaps'. Teachers' planning shows how they are starting to plan more precisely how they will meet the differing needs in their classes.
- Similar arrangements have been developed in the early years. The Nursery teacher had been in place for a week at the time of the previous inspection. So far this year, detailed observations and assessments of each child are plotted against all areas of learning. The teacher has begun to use statements about what the children have achieved, are working towards or have still to do, to target and plan their next steps.
- Leaders and teachers have already started to use the assessment information and tracking system to take action aimed at improving pupils' outcomes. Leaders and teachers have met to discuss the progress of every pupil in the school and plan to do this at frequent intervals. Through these discussions, they have begun to provide extra

help for pupils that are causing concern or have fallen behind. They have also targeted further extension for the most able pupils to make sure that they achieve well.

- The current work of the most able pupils so far this year is of a high standard across the curriculum. The quality of writing seen, for example, was beyond typical age-related expectations. Most-able pupils reported that they feel increasingly challenged by the work that they are set, saying that they have to think hard in most lessons. They say that teachers help them to do their very best and have positive attitudes to making and learning from mistakes. Most-able pupils are more often prompted to deepen their understanding through answering questions that require them to explain, compare or make inferences.
- Pupils know the next steps that they need to take and have these in their books to refer to. Work of lower-ability pupils shows good progress so far this year, linked to these carefully identified next steps.
- Parents that spoke to the inspector informally had nothing but praise for the school. Some said that they did not recognise the school from the report, but nonetheless have recognised significant improvements at the school since. Parents are very well informed about the changes that have been made and are looking forward to receiving more detail about the progress made by their children.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(v)

- The previous inspection reported that the school did not actively promote British values because pupils were not adequately informed about other cultures and religions. Older pupils could not recall learning about different world religions, faiths or cultures. As a result, it said that pupils were ill-prepared for this aspect of life in modern Britain.
- Leaders worked together to draw up an action plan to give greater depth to the school's teaching and learning of fundamental British values, determined that it would not just be about reciting terminology.
- Pupils are engaging well with the more active and explicit promotion of British values now being undertaken by leaders and teachers. In discussion, pupils demonstrate that they are reflective and think carefully about the issues teachers explore with them. They have a good understanding of tolerance and there is a growing depth to their understanding, for example the balance between individual liberty and the rule of law. In Year 6, a display about British values showed pupils' clear, thoughtful reflections about what particular values mean to them.
- Leaders and teachers have begun to implement plans to study a different faith each half-term. Pupils are enthused by learning about different faiths, religions and cultures. They said that they have done this in the past, but that they like the fact it is more often now. Writing sampled showed how pupils had reflected thoughtfully on what they had learned

about in assembly during Black History Month. In other work, pupils described what they understood about the beliefs and teachings of Hinduism.

- The curriculum now includes a rolling programme of visits to other places of worship, with a Year 4 trip to a synagogue taking place shortly. Pupils that spoke with the inspector were excited by the rich experiences that the curriculum offers them.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The previous full inspection judged safeguarding to be weak. Leaders did not make sure that pupils were kept safe at all times. The designated safeguarding lead was not aware of key changes to legislation because they had not completed up-to-date training. The single central record and the school's safeguarding policy were missing key information.
- There have been significant improvements in the school's work to safeguard pupils. The designated safeguarding lead and assistant (the deputy headteacher and key stage 1 leader) have both had recent training at the correct level. The new headteacher has made the school's approach to safeguarding pupils clearer and more systematic. Crucially, she has ensured that these systems and processes are all very well communicated to staff.
- The current culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. All staff and governors have had varied and effective safeguarding training since the full inspection. They have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities relating to safeguarding, and are clear about school procedures and processes to protect pupils. Tighter induction procedures ensure that new staff are furnished with the appropriate knowledge and understanding.
- A new, comprehensive safeguarding policy has been adopted and is published on the school's website. It is fully up to date and takes account of recent guidance. This year, the school's record-keeping is systematic and fit for purpose.

Paragraph 10

- Previously, inspectors found that pupils' personal development was inadequate because leaders had not ensured that bullying was eradicated. Class logs and discussions with pupils revealed that there had been some persistent incidents of bullying, particularly in Year 4. Some pupils told inspectors that bullying was still ongoing and a significant proportion of parents expressed concerns.
- There is clear and strong evidence of improvement, both in terms of pupils' understanding of bullying and in the reduction of incidents of bullying or other upset. Both pupils and teachers explained how they are getting better at teaching and learning conflict-resolution skills.

- School records show that there have been no bullying incidents this term. However, any concerns or unacceptable behaviour of any kind are documented carefully, indicating that staff take these issues seriously. Records show that parents are involved or informed of any incidents. Precise next steps set out what action is to be taken, by who and when.
- Systematic, central storing of any incidents or concerns have enabled leaders to begin to analyse patterns and identify issues. They are particularly alert to any repeat incidents involving the same pupils. The number of incidents is now part of reporting to governors. Although these systems are very new, early indications suggest that the number of incidents, although not high in the previous half-term, is on track to be lower this half-term.
- Pupils, including a group from last year's Year 4, now in Year 5, were unanimously positive about the improvements. They described their experience now as 'calm'. They were completely confident that bullying no longer happens, and that even low-level incidents are much rarer. They reported that if there are any problems, 'teachers sort it out really well', that adults listen and 'they are fair'. Parents of pupils in Year 5 that spoke with the inspector conveyed a similarly positive picture.
- Leaders have revised the written policy and strategy on anti-bullying, which is fully reflective of the rapidly improving practice found first-hand.
- The new curriculum and resources for personal, social, and health education are already making a marked difference for pupils. Pupils and teachers think that the school has definitely improved teaching about issues such as bullying, racism and equality. Teachers said that previously they did not really use the term 'bullying' with pupils, but now these issues are explored explicitly and with greater clarity. Parents said that they have noticed how their children are developing the language to discuss their well-being.
- Pupils feel 'heard'. They really like the weekly 'pupil voice' sessions introduced by the new headteacher. Other strategies have been introduced to give pupils different methods of voicing any concerns.

Paragraph 15

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that the admissions register clearly identified those pupils who are on roll. Consequently, this independent school standard was unmet.
- Staff responsible for the admissions register now have a clear understanding of what is required. They have ensured that the admissions register shows which pupils are on roll and which have left. The destinations of leavers have been completed for the last two years, although some gaps remain historically.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(iii), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(ii), 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(b)

- The previous inspection report detailed leaders' failure to carry out the necessary checks on the suitability of staff, including those in the early years. They did not check whether teachers have been prohibited from teaching or whether adults were disqualified by association with adults who may pose a threat to children. The single central record was also incomplete regarding whether all staff have the right to work in the United Kingdom.
- All appropriate checks on the suitability of staff, governors and proprietors, including those in the early years, have now been carried out. This includes the prohibition, disqualification, disqualification by association and right to work in the United Kingdom checks. All checks are recorded on the single central register.
- Leaders have made the process for carrying out these checks more systematic. Comprehensive checklists detail exactly what checks are required and when they have been completed. In addition, there are now processes in place for leaders and governors to monitor that systems are effective. Governors conveyed a strong sense that there is now 'zero tolerance' of any slippage, even procedural, in terms of safeguarding.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 28(1), 28(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors found some unmet independent school standards relating to the premises. Staff shared some toilet facilities with pupils. In the playground, drinking water was not clearly labelled.
- All toilet facilities for pupils and staff are now separate and clearly labelled. The adult toilet cubicle that was previously alongside girls' toilets with shared handwashing facilities has been designated for pupils only. Appropriate adjustments have been made to the door to ensure that pupils are safe when using it. There are suitable toilet facilities for early years children.
- The drinking water supply in the playground is now clearly labelled with a permanent, weatherproof sign.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The previous inspection found that leadership and management, including governance, were ineffective. Leaders did not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The performance of teachers was not closely overseen. Governors received insufficient information about the school's performance from school leaders, causing great difficulty in their ability to hold school leaders to account. Governors had failed to ensure that all of the independent school standards were met or that pupils were fully safeguarded.
- Leaders acted decisively and with appropriate urgency in response to the findings of the previous inspection. As one pupil put it, they feel the school has 'really accomplished something'.
- In a short space of time, the new headteacher has galvanised other leaders and staff and created a strong sense of positivity and determination. Staff praised the change in leadership approach in the school, particularly how it has 'enabled leaders at all levels to take part'. Staff agreed with each other that they have 'more of a voice and feel invested' in the improvements being made.
- Pupils, parents, staff, school leaders, governors and proprietors all emphasised how much communication at all levels has improved since the full inspection. This is making a significant contribution to creating a culture of openness, honesty, and determination to return the school to former successes. As one member of staff observed, there is 'a lot more clarity about what we need to do and how to do it'.
- Minutes of regular meetings between leaders show that they are focused and productive. The headteacher has clarified the roles and responsibilities of other leaders in the school. She has taken the first steps to strengthen accountability by setting out appraisal responsibilities for teaching and outcomes.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning has been made more systematic and regular. It involves a range of different leaders and incorporates a good range of activities. Monitoring records are focused on securing improvement and consistency across the school, but tend to focus more on the provision and teaching as opposed to how well pupils are learning. The headteacher has invited additional challenge by asking external professionals to evaluate the work of the school.
- The governing body and proprietors reported that school leaders are much more open now and provide them with more information than at the time of the previous inspection. This includes information that is beginning to emerge from the electronic tracking system. Wisely, the chair of the governing body has arranged additional training on effective governance for all governors next term.
- Governors and proprietors visit the school regularly. Leaders responsible for particular aspects of the school's work commented how governors' questioning is becoming more focused and incisive.
- Leaders have revised the school's action plan in the light of feedback from Ofsted. Helpfully, the action plan now uses the findings of the previous inspection, the recommendations and independent school standards as a starting point. Under these

headings, leaders have grouped relevant and timely actions to tackle weaknesses. The criteria that leaders intend to use to check the rate of improvement are now, more often, measurable. However, leaders and governors recognise that this aspect of the plan can be further sharpened as they draw out more information from the new tracking system. For example, at time of this progress monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher was imminently due to receive training about how to analyse the progress of different groups of pupils.

- The headteacher, governors and proprietors have made rigorous checks and taken all of the necessary actions to ensure that all previously unmet standards are now met.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3, 3(g)).
- The proprietor ensures that they actively promote fundamental British values and that pupils acquire a greater understanding of different cultural traditions by enabling them to acquire an appreciation of and respect for other cultures (paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(v)).
- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy (paragraph 10).
- The proprietor ensures that there is an admissions register which is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15)).
- The proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm the person's right to work in the United Kingdom and records this on the register (paragraphs (18)(2)(c), (18)(2)(c)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii)).
- The proprietor ensures that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act. The proprietor ensures that an individual ("MB"), not being the chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. In relation to each member of staff ("S"), a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 20(6), 20(6)(a)(ii), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 2(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in subparagraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question: [whether] a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the

2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (paragraph 21(1), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii)).

- The proprietor ensures that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils (paragraph 23(1)(a)).
- The proprietor ensures that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(c)).
- The proprietor ensures that leaders have sufficient skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(a), (b), (c)).

School details

Unique reference number	118987
DfE registration number	886/6041
Inspection number	10025691

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	Sisters of Mercy
Chair	Roger Goodman
Headteacher	Elizabeth Hill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,565–£7,755
Telephone number	01474 533 012
Website	www.sjcps.org
Email address	secretary@sjcps.org
Date of previous standard inspection	25–27 May 2016

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Convent Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic independent co-educational day school.
- A new headteacher has started since the previous inspection. Initially, she was appointed as consultant headteacher to support the deputy as acting headteacher for a short interim period.

- The school's proprietors are the Sisters of Mercy (a Roman Catholic religious order). The school is now managed by a governing body in association with the proprietors. There have been considerable changes in the membership of the governing body since the full inspection.
- The early years 'Footprints' provision, referred to in the previous inspection report, no longer operates. The Nursery caters for children from the age of three, in line with the school's registration.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the school's previous standard inspection, 25–27 May 2016. It was conducted without notice.
- The school's action plan to address the failings identified in the last full inspection was rejected by the Department for Education on 12 October 2016.
- The inspector met with proprietors, governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other school leaders and staff. He also spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector met with two groups of pupils and sampled pupils' work. The inspector scrutinised a range of the school's documents and records, including those relating to safeguarding, checked relevant aspects of the premises and made brief visits to some classes.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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